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Diana T Fritz 08/27/2006 05:51:19 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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S E C R E T ABU DHABI 04696

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 004696

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2015
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [KU](#) [QA](#) [SA](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: UAEG RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) Summary: On November 9, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ronald Neumann, visited Abu Dhabi and met with Minister of Information Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan (AbZ) and MFA U/S Abdullah Rashid al Noaimi. He inquired about GCC states, views and UAEG's recommendations on Afghanistan. AbZ responded that Afghanistan needs to be outward-looking and to be proactive in engaging other nations in seeking assistance. Al Noaimi suggested that Afghanistan should look to the UAE, a federation of seven emirates, as an example of successful nation-building and should be more specific in expressing its needs to potential donors. AbZ showed some, unspecified, willingness to respond to a focused direct approach from President Karzai. AbZ stated that UAEG's 220-man Special Ops presence in Afghanistan would continue. He was clear that UAE desire not to publicize its military support for Coalition was based on potential terrorist threats to UAE; not political factors. The sensitivity does not apply to economic assistance. End summary.

"Afghans, Look Outward!"

2. (S) Responding to Ambassador Neumann's inquiry as to what Afghanistan could do differently, Al Noaimi said that the Afghans need to arrive at consensus on a common vision for their country and to "market" that vision, transcending tribal loyalties. He said Karzai should appoint emissaries to see what is happening in the gulf and elsewhere. AbZ noted that Afghanistan has remained too insular and that many of the Afghans' ongoing struggles stem from that isolation. Both UAEG interlocutors extolled the UAE's success as the result of a conscious effort to keep up with the outside world. AbZ called on Afghans to "learn from us--learn to look outward; they should get out and follow our example."

UAE Special Ops

13. (S) Since October 2003, UAEG has maintained 220 Special Ops troops in Afghanistan. In prior conversations, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan (MbZ), Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, has told Ambassador and General Abizaid that UAE troops will remain in Afghanistan until the mission is complete, the intent being to have UAE troops "bloodied" and seasoned by combat to prepare them for action against potential security threats when/if required at home. AbZ admitted that the UAEG has little effective control over its ports and borders, noting that over 3,000 Saudis alone and an "unknown number" of other foreigners cross back and forth daily. AbZ warned that the foreign threats menacing the UAE from inside are growing daily, but joked that if he could choose between the current situation and that posed by Abu Nidal twenty years ago, he would welcome back Abu Nidal.

GCC Attitudes toward Afghanistan

14. (S) AbZ characterized the GCC states' perception of the Afghan problem as relatively small compared to Iraq. He said that caught between assisting with the earthquake in Pakistan, Hurricane Katrina, infrastructure development in Iraq, and development assistance projects in the Palestinian territories, even the UAE is "stretched to its limits," noting that the rest of the GCC states are even less likely to offer assistance. AbZ observed that Saudi Arabia will not be reaching out overseas. Taking a swipe at the Saudi king, he said: "It is not in King Abdullah's personality; he is not the type to make sure his neighbor has a meal tonight." He further noted that "the Kuwaitis have their own problems right now and will not initiate any project on their own," but may be willing to join others once a development program begins. He complained that "Qatar is doing much less than they could," but said he has low expectations of their willingness to help.

Building a nation is not easy --
Leadership lacking in the region

15. (S) Al Noaimi said that "Arabs are not having serious discussions about anything right now including Afghanistan." He sees "all talk and no action -- and with even the talk being tailored to domestic audiences. Arabs have not awakened to the seriousness of the current situation and to security threats; we see it, the Qataris and Jordanians see it, but no one else seems to." He continued: "Building a nation is not easy, but it absolutely starts with leadership, which is lacking throughout the region." He portrayed the UAE as a leader in the region by default since everyone else seemed to be "suffering from paralysis." AbZ pointed out that immediately following 9/11 even the Saudis were slow to act and distance themselves from the Taliban, and eventually did so only after the UAE took the first action. He added that he had heard later from the Saudis that if the UAE had not acted when they did, the Saudi government would still be deciding what to do.

Afghan Elections, Counter Narcotics, Pakistan

16. (S) AbZ expressed interest in the current state of Afghan politics, asking why the vote count took so long to finalize. Ambassador Neumann explained that the infrastructure problems throughout Afghanistan meant that ballot boxes were being transported from remote regions by horse and donkey, pointing out the need for physical infrastructure to improve trade and transportation of agriculture to market. AbZ said he was not convinced that Karzai would be tough on the narcotics because the international community was not providing adequate alternatives. Ambassador noted that better infrastructure will pave the way for agricultural alternatives to opium to take hold in remote areas. He also

commented on the interaction between Presidents Karzai and Musharraf, which has escalated into heated words in the past. (Embassy Kabul Comment: It is better now and we are working hard to keep it that way. End Comment.) AbZ wondered whether Musharraf was perceived as domestically weaker than in the past.

17. (C) Comment: Both UAEG interlocutors expressed appreciation for Ambassador Neumann's visit and recommended that the Government of Afghanistan be more specific and forthcoming in describing its needs in ways that will appeal to potential donors as, for instance, at the planned Compact for Afghanistan Conference in London, January 30-31. Neumann undertook to work on this with the GOA. UAEG has shown a marked propensity to respond with greater alacrity when requests are project-related as opposed to petitions for cash contributions. End comment.

18. (U) This message has been cleared by Ambassador Neumann in Kabul.
SISON